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Report on the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2038

**An Examination undertaken for South Norfolk Council with the support
of Newton Flotman Parish Council on the February 2025 submission
version of the Plan.**

Independent Examiner: Derek Stebbing BA(Hons) DipEP MRTPI

Date of Report: 12 June 2025

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- the Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Newton Flotman Parish Council (the Parish Council);
- the Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Area;
- the Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – from 2024 to 2038; and,
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

The Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2038

- 1.1 The Parish of Newton Flotman lies between Norwich and Long Stratton in South Norfolk district approximately 7 miles south of Norwich. At the 2021 Census, the Parish had a population of 1,418 persons, which represented a slight decline from the 2011 population of 1,489 persons.
- 1.2 The village of Newton Flotman lies on the A140 road which links Norwich and Ipswich and is a former Roman road. The nearest mainline railway station is at Norwich. There are regular bus services linking Newton Flotman with Norwich, Long Stratton and Harleston.
- 1.3 The landscape of the Parish is characterised by the valley of the River Tas which flows through the Parish. The Parish boundary follows the river and its floodplains. Beyond the river valley, the landscape mainly comprises mixed farmlands, punctuated by areas of woodland and plantations. The majority of the Parish is in area of low flood risk but the areas around the River Tas, along the eastern side of the village, are within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- 1.4 The village was originally developed along two roads, Old Street and Flordon Road, with Old Street forming the original alignment of the A140.

The village grew substantially in the 1960s and 1970s, and a new bridge was constructed across the River Tas which diverted the A140 away from the village centre. A new primary school (Newton Flotman Church of England Primary Academy) was built during this period, catering for children from the villages of Newton Flotman, Swainsthorpe and Saxlingham Thorpe and which had a school roll of 102 pupils in September 2023. Further housing developments in the village occurred during the 1990s and more recently during 2004-2008.

- 1.5 The Parish contains a number of locally important wildlife habitats, including a number of County Wildlife Sites and Roadside Nature Reserves. The Parish also has a rich heritage, with eight Grade II and two Grade II* Listed Buildings, including the Grade II* listed St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church dating from the 14th Century. Part of the Rainthorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden lies within the Parish.
- 1.6 The village contains a range of community facilities and services including the primary school, a village shop, a village hall and a doctor's surgery, which is a branch surgery of the Long Stratton Medical Partnership. The main area of public open space within the village is the Alan King Playing Field adjacent to the village hall.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.7 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Plan by South Norfolk Council, with the agreement of the Parish Council.
- 1.8 I am a chartered town planner, with over 45 years of experience in planning. I have worked in both the public and private sectors and have experience of examining both local plans and neighbourhood plans. I have also served on a Government working group considering measures to improve the local plan system and undertaken peer reviews on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.
- 1.9 I am independent of the Qualifying Body and the Local Authority and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.10 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
 - (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or

(c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

1.11 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').

1.12 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.13 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;

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- be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)¹; and
- meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.14 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the Habitats Regulations').²

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Development Plan for this part of South Norfolk Council, at the time the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan was prepared (not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development), comprised:

- the Greater Norwich Local Plan (2018-2038) (GNLP) (adopted 25 March 2024);
- the South Norfolk Local Plan – Site Specific Allocations & Policies Document (SSAPD) (adopted 26 October 2015); and
- the South Norfolk Local Plan – Development Management Policies Document (DMPD) (adopted 26 October 2015).

A Review of the GNLP is scheduled to commence in October 2025 leading to a Regulation 18 consultation in September-November 2026 and Regulation 19 Pre-submission consultation in July-September 2027.

2.2 The South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan (SNVCHAP) is in course of preparation and will cover the period to 2038. Two Regulation 18 consultations were undertaken in 2021 and 2023, with two Regulation 19 Pre-submission consultations being undertaken in 2023 and 2024. Taking account of the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) with regard to an emerging Local Plan³, the SNVCHAP is now at an advanced stage of preparation, with its submission for examination scheduled for August 2025, and I have considered its implications for this Plan where necessary in my main assessment.

2.3 The Basic Conditions Statement (at Section 4 – Table A) provides an assessment of how each of the 13 policies proposed in the draft Plan has

¹ The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

² This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

³ PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20190509.

regard to national policy and is in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies in the adopted GNLP, SSAPD and DMPD. Where applicable, Section 4 – Table B in the Basic Conditions Statement sets out how the policies in the draft Plan have sought to take account of policies contained in the emerging SNVCHAP (notwithstanding for the purposes of the Basic Conditions general conformity is tested against the extant strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area).

- 2.4 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The PPG offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. Unless otherwise stated, all references in this report are to the December 2023 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.⁴

Submitted Documents

- 2.5 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- The submission version of the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2038 (February 2025), including the appended Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes (AECOM) (January 2025);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (January 2025);
 - the Consultation Statement (February 2025);
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report (August 2024);
 - the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report (August 2024); and
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation.⁵
- 2.6 I have also considered the supporting evidence documents that have informed the preparation of the Plan, including the following:
- Data Profile for Newton Flotman (Newton Flotman Parish Council) (March 2024);
 - Newton Flotman Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) (AECOM) (May 2024).⁶

⁴ A revised NPPF was published on 12 December 2024 which includes transitional arrangements for neighbourhood plans. Paragraph 239 of the December 2024 NPPF advises that it will only apply to neighbourhood plans that were submitted after 12 March 2025. This Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to South Norfolk Council prior to that date.

⁵ View at: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/planning/future-development/local-plans/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans-south-norfolk/newton-flotman-neighbourhood-plan/newton-flotman-neighbourhood-plan>

⁶ View both documents in the link in footnote 5 above.

Examiner Questions

2.7 Following my appointment as the independent examiner and my initial review of the draft Plan, its supporting documents and representations made at the Regulation 16 stage, I wrote to South Norfolk Council and the Parish Council on 6 May 2025⁷ seeking further clarification and information on five matters contained in the submission Plan, as follows:

- Firstly, with regard to the emerging SNVCHAP, I requested that South Norfolk Council please confirm the accuracy of the information set out at paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17, including Figure 5, in the draft Plan regarding the emerging Plan, and also provide me with further details of the planning permission for 31 dwellings that has been granted for the development of Site VC NEW2 that is referenced at paragraphs 2.17 and 5.22 in the draft Plan.

I also requested that South Norfolk Council please advise me of the approved housing mix for the development of Site VC NEW2, including the quantum and percentage of Affordable Housing.

I further requested that South Norfolk Council please also advise me of any further planning applications for residential development that may have been submitted on sites within the Neighbourhood Area since the submission of the draft Plan in February 2025

- Secondly, with regard to Policy NF6 (Existing and New Community Infrastructure) in the draft Plan, I noted that, as drafted, the final section of this policy suggests that the community infrastructure listed as clauses a)-i) will be supported regardless of any other planning considerations. It therefore does not provide any effective guidance for development management purposes. Conversely, the preceding two parts of the policy set criteria for the support of proposals affecting existing community infrastructure. In my assessment, the siting and location of at least some of the potential new community infrastructure will require compliance with other Development Plan policies and an assessment of possible impacts upon other local amenities, including residential amenity. I also noted that Section 9 of the draft Plan, which identifies possible Community Action Projects, advises that *"there is some overlap with Policy NF6"*. In my assessment, there should be no overlap between Policy NF6 and the possible Community Action Projects, which are clearly aspirational at this stage and will be subject to further investigation. I therefore requested that the Qualifying Body please review the final section of the policy and provide me with a note setting out possible revisions to the policy text that address the matters that I had identified.

⁷ View at: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/asset-library/examiner-procedural-matters-and-questions-including-qb-and-snc-response.pdf>

- Thirdly, with regard to Policy NF9 (Natural Assets and Biodiversity) in the draft Plan, I noted that, as drafted, the first part of this policy includes a wide range of important natural assets which should be conserved and enhanced where possible. It is possible to identify the location of some of these assets by reference to Figures 31 and 32, and also to some of the information in Section 6 of the Data Profile (March 2024). However, some of the natural assets, such as field hedgerows and Roadside Nature Reserves, cannot be identified. In view of the stated importance of these assets because of their landscape and/or biodiversity value, I considered that greater detail is required on such assets, particularly regarding their location, for the benefit of future users of the Plan. I observed that paragraph 8.2 states that these “*have come from the knowledge of Newton Flotman residents and consultation*”. I also noted that two Roadside Nature Reserves are proposed for designation as Local Green Spaces in Policy NF10. I further noted that South Norfolk Council considers that this part of the policy would be better placed as supporting text. I therefore requested that the Qualifying Body please review this part of Policy NF9 and provide me with a note setting out further information and details on those natural assets which are not readily identifiable within paragraphs 8.2-8.6 of the supporting text or on Figures 31 and 32. I commented that the Qualifying Body may also wish to take account of the representation submitted by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (Ref. NF/NP-07) which provides some additional information that is not presently included within the draft Plan.
- Fourthly, with regard to the proposed Local Green Spaces set out in the draft Plan, the addresses of Sites 1 and 6 were missing from the specific site assessments. It is clear that these should be the ‘Alan Avenue green space’ and ‘Kings Green’ respectively, but I sought the Qualifying Body’s confirmation of that point. I also considered that there should be more precise addresses for Sites 10 and 11, rather than the present descriptions, and I requested that the Qualifying Body consider that matter.
- Finally, with regard to Policy NF13 (Localised Flooding), in the copy of the draft Plan that had been supplied to me, the third paragraph of draft policy text was incomplete. I requested that the Qualifying Body please provide me with the full text of the proposed policy that should be the subject of this examination.

2.8 In reply to my letter of 6 May 2025, South Norfolk Council and the Qualifying Body provided me with responses to the questions on 9 May 2025.⁸ I have taken account of the additional information contained in these responses as part of my full assessment of the draft Plan, alongside the documents listed at paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 above.

⁸ View at: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/asset-library/examiner-procedural-matters-and-questions-including-qb-and-snc-response.pdf>

Site Visit

- 2.9 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 19 May 2025 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan, evidential documents and representations.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.10 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections and comments regarding the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. I am satisfied that the material supplied is sufficiently comprehensive for me to be able to deal with the matters raised under the written representations procedure, and that there was not a requirement to convene a public hearing as part of this examination. In all cases the information provided has enabled me to reach a conclusion on the matters concerned.

Modifications

- 2.11 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications in full in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by the Newton Flotman Parish Council. An application to South Norfolk Council for the Parish Council area of Newton Flotman to be designated a neighbourhood planning area was made on 26 September 2023 and was approved by South Norfolk Council on 11 October 2023.
- 3.2 The designated Neighbourhood Area comprises the whole of the Parish of Newton Flotman. The submission Plan contains a map (Figure 2) of the designated area at Page 8. The Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan is the only Neighbourhood Plan in the designated area.
- 3.3 The Parish Council is the designated body for the preparation of the Plan. The preparation of the Plan has been led by the Parish Council through a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, comprising nine members, being several Parish Councillors and a number of local residents.

Plan Period

- 3.4 The draft Plan specifies on its front cover and on Page 4 the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2024 to 2038. This encompasses the remainder of the plan period for the adopted GNLP and the emerging SNVCHAP which covers the period 2018-2038.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.5 The Consultation Statement and its Appendices sets out a full record of the Plan's preparation and its associated engagement and consultation activity. The decision to undertake the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan was taken in September 2023, and the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group was formed by the Parish Council in October 2023.
- 3.6 The preparation of the draft Plan has involved four key stages. Stage 1 was the initial consultative work within the Newton Flotman community and the identification of the key issues and themes that the Plan would need to address. This stage extended from initial consultative events held in the village in August 2023 through to March 2024.
- 3.7 Stage 2 extended from March 2024 to July 2024 and involved a Household Survey during March/April of that year, and the preparation of the Housing Needs Assessment and the Design Guidance and Codes by AECOM in May 2024 and July 2024 respectively. A total of 133 households responded to the Household Survey, representing a response rate of 22%. The survey results were used to inform the development of the policies for the preparation of the draft Regulation 14 consultation Plan.
- 3.8 Stage 3 extended from April 2024 through to November 2024, with work commencing on the drafting of policies and other sections of the draft Plan in April 2024. Following approval from the Parish Council on 24 September 2024, the draft Plan was published for Regulation 14 pre-submission public consultation from 21 October to 27 November 2024. The consultation was accompanied by local publicity and the draft Plan was made available online and at the Village Centre and at St. Mary's Church. A total of 235 comments were made on the draft Plan, which are fully recorded at Appendix 6 to the Consultation Statement. This includes comments made by South Norfolk Council and other statutory consultees including Anglian Water and Norfolk County Council and responses from non-statutory consultees.
- 3.9 Stage 4 commenced in January 2025 and involved amendments to the draft Plan, where considered appropriate, to take account of the responses received during the Regulation 14 consultation (and this is fully recorded at Appendix 6 of the Consultation Statement). This stage continued with the formal submission of the draft Plan to South Norfolk Council for examination in February 2025.

- 3.10 The Consultation Statement provides a comprehensive record of the community engagement and consultation that was undertaken during the preparation of the Plan, including summaries of the responses that were received at each key stage.
- 3.11 At its meeting held on 28 January 2025, the Parish Council resolved to formally submit the Plan under Regulation 15 to South Norfolk Council for examination. Regulation 16 consultation was then held for a period of six weeks from 10 March to 23 April 2025. I have taken account of the 29 comments that were received from 11 respondents, as well as the Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the Plan, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement, and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.12 I am satisfied that the draft Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.13 From my review of the documents before me, the draft Plan does not include policies or proposals that relate to any of the categories of excluded development.⁹

Human Rights

- 3.14 Neither South Norfolk Council nor any other party has raised any issues concerning a breach of, or incompatibility with Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my assessment of the Plan, its accompanying supporting documents and the consultation responses made to the Plan at the Regulations 14 and 16 stages, I am satisfied that the Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. I consider that none of the objectives and policies in the Plan will have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Many will have a positive impact.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 South Norfolk Council issued a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report in August 2024 in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA

⁹ The meaning of 'excluded development' is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

Regulations'). This Screening Report was submitted alongside the draft Plan and, in summary (at Section 5), states that the draft Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and that it is concluded that the draft Plan can therefore be screened out for its requirement of SEA. The Screening Report has been the subject of consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, and none of these bodies raised any concerns such that a SEA would be required for the Plan. Their full responses are included at Appendix B to the Screening Report.

- 4.2 I have considered the SEA methodology by which the Plan was duly screened to determine whether the Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, bearing in mind also that the policies in the adopted GNLP were also subject to separate sustainability appraisal at various stages. Overall, I am satisfied that a proportionate approach has been taken and that the Plan was screened to take full account of any potential environmental effects upon interests of importance in the Plan area.
- 4.3 The Plan was also screened by South Norfolk Council in May 2024 in order to establish whether the Plan required a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with the Habitats Regulations. There is one site of European importance approximately three kilometres to the west of the Plan area, which is the Norfolk Valley Fen Special Area of Conservation (SAC). All other sites of European importance are further than 15 kilometres from the Plan area. The HRA Screening Assessment concludes (at paragraph 5.1) that the draft Plan is not predicted to have any likely significant effect on European designated sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Habitats Regulations is therefore screened out. I have also noted that Natural England (in a consultation response dated 20 August 2024) has not raised any concerns regarding the necessity for an HRA.
- 4.4 Therefore, I consider that on the basis of the information provided and my independent consideration of the SEA/HRA Screening Report and the Plan itself, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations under retained EU law.

Main Assessment

- 4.5 The NPPF states (at paragraph 30) that "*Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan*" and also that "*Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies*". The NPPF (at paragraph 11) also sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to state (at paragraph 13) that neighbourhood plans should

support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

- 4.6 Having considered above whether the Plan complies with various legal and procedural requirements, it is now necessary to deal with the question of whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions (see paragraph 1.12 of this report), particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic Development Plan policies.
- 4.7 I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of the Plan's 13 policies, which address the following themes: Development; Community; Access; and Natural Environment. As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies in the Plan are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.¹⁰ I recommend some modifications as a result.

Synopsis

- 4.8 The Plan is addressing a period up to 2038 and seeks to ensure that the Parish of Newton Flotman will remain a cohesive rural community with good infrastructure for all. New development will reflect current and future needs of the Parish, be well designed, environmentally sustainable and sympathetic to the character of Newton Flotman. Wildlife, green spaces and local heritage will be valued, enhanced and protected. Sections 5-8 of the Plan contains specific policies in respect of each of the themes listed above.
- 4.9 Section 1 of the Plan provides an introduction to the Plan following the designation of the Parish as a neighbourhood area in October 2023. Figure 2 shows the designated Neighbourhood Area.
- 4.10 Section 2 of the Plan, entitled 'Newton Flotman Parish', describes the local context, providing a brief history of Newton Flotman, demographic information about the Parish and a brief summary of the spatial and strategic context that sets the national and local policy background for the preparation of the Plan.
- 4.11 Section 3, entitled 'How the Plan was prepared' provides a summary of the work that was undertaken for the preparation of the Plan (see paragraphs 3.6-3.9 of this report).

¹⁰ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

4.12 Section 4 of the draft Plan, entitled 'Vision, Objectives and Policies', includes the Plan's vision and objectives and a listing of the Plan's policies under each of the four themes of Development; Community; Access; and Natural Environment.

4.13 The Plan's vision is as follows:

"Newton Flotman will remain a cohesive rural community with good infrastructure for all. New development (housing, commercial and community) will reflect current and future needs of the parish, be well designed, environmentally sustainable, and sympathetic to the character of Newton Flotman. Our wildlife, green spaces and local heritage will be valued and protected."

4.14 Paragraph 4.4 of the Plan lists four suitably derived objectives stemming from the vision and through engagement with the community, as follows:

Development

Objective 1: To support development that is well designed, environmentally sustainable and sympathetic to the character of Newton Flotman.

Community

Objective 2: To encourage a cohesive rural community with good infrastructure for all.

Access

Objective 3: To encourage safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and vehicle access within Newton Flotman parish.

Natural Environment

Objective 4: To protect and enhance the natural environment of Newton Flotman.

4.15 The Basic Conditions Statement (at Section 4 and at Table A) describes how the Plan, and its Policies, has regard to national policies contained in the NPPF and (at Section 5) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Table A within Sections 2-4 of the Basic Conditions Statement set out how each of the Plan's 13 policies are consistent with the national policies contained in the NPPF; are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted GNLP; and are consistent with the relevant policies in the adopted South Norfolk DMPD and SSAPD.

4.16 I consider that overall, subject to the detailed modifications which I recommend to specific policies below, that individually and collectively the Plan's policies will contribute to the achievement of sustainable patterns of development. There are a number of detailed matters which I consider require modification to ensure that the policies have the necessary regard to national policy and the strategic policies of South Norfolk Council. Accordingly, I make recommendation to address these matters in this report.

Specific Issues of Compliance

- 4.17 I turn now to consider the proposed Policies in the draft Plan, and I take into account, where appropriate, the representations that have been made concerning those policies, together with the responses by the Qualifying Body and South Norfolk Council to my questions (see paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 above). Sections 5-8 of the Plan sets out the proposed policies for the Plan area under the headings of the four policy themes.

Development

- 4.18 Section 5 of the draft Plan addresses the theme of Development within the Plan area and contains five policies (Policies NF1-5) to meet the Plan's objective to support development that is well designed, environmentally sustainable and sympathetic to the character of Newton Flotman.
- 4.19 Policy NF1 (Design) states that the design of all new development in the Parish must reflect the local distinctiveness and character of the area, as outlined in the Character Appraisal at pages 34-71 of the Newton Flotman Design Guidelines and Codes (which is at Appendix B to the draft Plan) and be physically integrated where possible. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals for new development should accord with guidelines and codes set out in the Newton Flotman Design Guidelines and Codes. The policy then lists the relevant Design Codes, which are referenced as DC.01-DC.11.
- 4.20 There have been no representations concerning this policy, which I consider to be suitably drafted and evidenced, primarily by the Newton Flotman Design Guidelines and Codes prepared by AECOM in January 2025.
- 4.21 Policy NF2 (Housing Mix (Size, Type and Tenure)) states that proposals for new housing developments in the Plan area must provide for and contribute to a mix of housing that meets local needs and enables the creation of a mixed and balanced community. It goes on to state that proposals for new housing must take into account the findings of the Newton Flotman Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). New development must comprise of mainly 3-bedroom dwellings, with some 2-bedroom and 1-bedroom dwellings. Variety will be sought to provide for newly forming households on lower budgets, family housing and older households looking to downsize. All development must be delivered in line with the GNLP policy for 33% Affordable Housing on sites over 10 dwellings. Affordable home ownership products such as First Homes and shared ownership should be at a minimum discount of 40%. Specialist housing for older people in Newton Flotman is also encouraged, including accessible homes, bungalows and Lifetime Homes.
- 4.22 South Norfolk Council has made representations concerning the policy. In summary, they note that previous comments made at the Regulation 14 consultation stage regarding a significant disparity between the Greater

Norwich Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) and the Newton Flotman HNA concerning Affordable Housing need in South Norfolk potentially results in an incorrect assessment of Affordable Housing requirements and indicative tenure split for developments in Newton Flotman. South Norfolk Council has also expressed a concern at the proposed minimum discount of 40% for affordable home ownership products, as it could jeopardise the delivery of new affordable homes. I concur with that concern, and I consider that the policy should not express a minimum level of discount.

- 4.23 I have studied both the Greater Norwich LHNA (which dates from 2021) and the Newton Flotman HNA (which dates from May 2024) and can recognise the disparity that is identified by South Norfolk Council. I further note that the Newton Flotman HNA was not amended or adjusted to take account of the Regulation 14 consultation response made by South Norfolk Council, and this is recorded in the Consultation Statement. It is not possible for me to verify the accuracy or otherwise of the data within the LHNA and HNA, but I am clear that some amendments are necessary to the policy and to its supporting text in order to ensure that the policy requirements are capable of being implemented with the support of South Norfolk Council.
- 4.24 Accordingly, in order to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend a number of focused amendments to the policy text and its supporting text to take account of South Norfolk Council's comments, and these are addressed by recommended modification **PM1**.
- 4.25 Policy NF3 (Location and scale of further housing development) states that the focus of new development will be within the settlement boundary of Newton Flotman as shown on Figure 5, where it can best integrate with existing development and is located near community facilities. In addition to the proposed site allocations contained within the emerging SNVCHAP, as shown on Figure 15 (and described at paragraph 2.17), within the settlement boundary, proposals for small windfall and infill development, consisting of individual or small groups of dwellings, will be supported where they enhance the form, character and setting of the location. Outside the identified settlement boundary, proposals for new housing development, including the conversion of existing buildings, such as barns and farm buildings, and replacement dwellings, will only be permitted where they accord with national and Local Plan policies. I am satisfied that the policy is appropriately drafted, subject to two focused amendments for accuracy which are addressed by recommended modification **PM2**.
- 4.26 Policy NF4 (Land off Alan Avenue (NEW1), local requirements) states that, in addition to the requirements of the South Norfolk Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan, and other relevant policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, the development of land off Alan Avenue for residential purposes should incorporate the following matters:

Housing mix

- a. Mixed type and tenure of housing, including Affordable Housing, as set out in policy NF2 of this Plan.
- b. 8 Affordable Homes as a minimum (delivered in line with the Greater Norwich Local Plan policy for 33 per cent Affordable Housing).

Layout and design

- c. Layout to enable a natural, functional and visual transition between the sites, NEW2 (31 homes), NEW1 (25 homes) and the existing Alan Avenue development.
- d. A cohesive design between NEW2 and NEW1, with complementary architectural styles.
- e. Designed in line with the Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes.

Access

- f. Vehicular access from the south (off Alan Avenue) to serve the site.
- g. Pedestrian and cycle access to and through the site to enable a walkable community, linking to key village amenities (Village Centre, recreation area, school, allotments and bus stops), through the provision of pavements and cycleways. Amenity space and biodiversity net gain.

Amenity space and biodiversity net gain

- h. New public open green space will be provided, as a wildlife area with outdoor seating, on or off the site. This is to be separate to any Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) provision.
- i. Biodiversity net gain of minimum of 10 percent on site. This is to be achieved through the planting of native trees and climate resilient planting, hedges and a wildlife area.

4.27 This policy concerns one of the two proposed housing allocation sites contained in the emerging SNVCHAP, which are Sites VC NEW1 (Land south-west of Alan Avenue), for approximately 25 dwellings, and VC NEW2 (Land adjacent Alan Avenue), for approximately 30 dwellings. The emerging SNVCHAP has been the subject of Regulation 19 Pre-submission consultation in 2023 with a further Regulation 19 consultation on an Addendum to the emerging Plan in August-October 2024. South Norfolk Council confirmed, in response to the first of my questions (see paragraph 2.7 above), that the Plan is due to be submitted for examination in August 2025 and that it is intended for adoption in April/May 2026. South Norfolk Council also confirmed that planning permission was granted on 4 March 2025 for the development of 31 dwellings at Site VC NEW2, with the quantum of Affordable Housing units being two shared ownership units.

4.28 It is the case that the SNVCHAP is an emerging Local Plan, and will not be submitted for examination until August 2025. Therefore, at this stage, this policy does need to clarify that point, as it is likely that this Plan could

be Made ahead of the prospective adoption of the SNVCHAP by South Norfolk Council in April/May 2026. As drafted, the policy sets out a series of local requirements for the development of Site VC NEW1 in the emerging SNVCHAP. However, in my assessment, a number of the listed requirements are in fact strategic policy requirements of South Norfolk Council, national policy requirements or duplications of other draft Policies in the Plan. By way of examples, Affordable Housing provision at this site will be delivered in accordance with the strategic GNLP policy (Policy 5); housing mix is the subject of Policy NF2 in the draft Plan (see above); design is the subject of Policy NF1 together with the accompanying Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes; and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a national policy requirement.

- 4.29 I therefore consider that a number of amendments are necessary to the text of this policy in order that it correctly sets out the specific local requirements for the development of this site that are not matters being addressed by other Policies in the Plan and are not strategic or national policy requirements. Recommended modification **PM3** sets out the necessary amendments.
- 4.30 Policy NF5 (Business development) states that proposals for new businesses and extensions to existing businesses, must be sensitively designed and not have a significant adverse impact upon the character of the area, the historic environment, adjoining uses, or the amenity of local residents, through either their built form, proposed use, or traffic generated. Premises for a nursery school, a pub, a café, a small shop, a post office, or small business units are supported in principle. Such proposals should include provision for high-speed broadband connections and adequate parking and servicing for visitors, including deliveries and couriers. Where possible, space for homeworking should be designed into new dwellings.
- 4.31 Subject to a number of focused textual amendments to achieve the necessary clarity, I am satisfied that this policy is appropriately drafted and will provide suitable policy support for the development of businesses within the Plan area. The focused amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM4**.
- 4.32 With recommended modifications PM1-PM4, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Development and its accompanying policies is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Community

- 4.33 Section 6 of the draft Plan addresses the theme of Community within the Plan area and contains one policy (Policies NF6) to meet the Plan's objective to encourage a cohesive rural community with good infrastructure for all.

- 4.34 Policy NF6 (Existing and new community infrastructure) states that the Plan identifies the existing community infrastructure that meets the needs of Newton Flotman residents, and lists eleven facilities and other valued community infrastructure (which are shown on Figure 23). It goes on to state that proposals for the improvement, adaptation or extension of existing community infrastructure will be supported where they accord with other Development Plan policies. Proposals for change of use, involving a potential loss of existing community infrastructure, will only be supported where an improved or equivalent facility can be located in an equally, or more accessible, location in the Parish or where it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of continued viable use. Finally, it sets out a list of nine new facilities or improvements to existing community infrastructure that would be supported.
- 4.35 Upon my initial assessment of the draft Plan, I noted a significant overlap between the final part of this policy and the Community Action Projects listed in Section 9 of the draft Plan. I raised this matter as the second of my preliminary questions (see paragraph 2.7 above) and I have taken account of the Qualifying Body's response on that matter, with which I am in agreement. I have also taken account of South Norfolk Council's representations concerning this policy in my full assessment. I consider that a number of amendments are required to ensure the policy's requirements are clear for the benefit of future users of the Plan. The necessary amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM5**.
- 4.36 I conclude that, with recommended modification PM5, I consider that the draft Plan's Policy (NF6) for Existing and new community infrastructure is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted GNLP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Access

- 4.37 Section 7 of the draft Plan addresses the theme of Access within the Plan area and contains two policies (Policies NF7 and NF8) to meet the Plan's objective to encourage safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and vehicle access within the Parish.
- 4.38 Policy NF7 (Pedestrian and cycle connectivity) states that, as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, the design of any new residential developments in the Plan area should include opportunities to enhance and join up networks of footpaths, including Public Rights of Way (which are shown on Figure 25), pavements and cycleways that are suitable for all users, within their designs and layouts. New provision should encourage alternatives to using private cars, enabling a walkable neighbourhood. Footpaths and cycleways should be accessible, visible and separate from roads where possible. The provision of new pavements, footpaths and cycleways will be supported, in particular where there are opportunities to:

- make connections through developments and enable a cohesive village network;
- connect to other surrounding parishes;
- link to existing community infrastructure;
- enable access to open countryside; and
- incorporate green infrastructure into the design and layout of routes, for example, trees and other vegetation, as appropriate.

- 4.39 Having regard to national policy, I consider that the title of the policy should reflect the need to promote Active Travel and I recommend an amendment through modification **PM6**.
- 4.40 Policy NF8 (A140 access, traffic calming and community parking) is in three parts and states, firstly, that development proposals that improve safe access to and from the A140 in both directions, for vehicles and pedestrians, will be supported. Secondly, it states that new appropriate traffic calming measures will be supported on Flordon Road. Finally, it states that new designated parking arrangements for Newton Flotman CofE Primary Academy (School Road), Flordon Road (near access to A140) and St Mary's Church (School Road and Church Road) will be supported.
- 4.41 I have given careful consideration to this policy as it potentially addresses matters that are within the responsibilities of Norfolk County Council as the Highways Authority. I am satisfied that the policy is appropriately drafted, subject to a focused addition to the first part of the policy to recognise the necessity for any development proposals affecting the A140 to secure the approval of the County Council. This amendment is addressed by recommended modification **PM7**.
- 4.42 With recommended modifications PM6 and PM7, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Access and its accompanying policies is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted GNLP, SSAPD and DMPD, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Natural Environment

- 4.43 Section 8 of the draft Plan addresses the theme of the Natural Environment within the Plan area and contains five policies (Policies NF9-NF13) to meet the Plan's objective to protect and enhance the natural environment of Newton Flotman.
- 4.44 Policy NF9 (Natural assets and biodiversity) is a lengthy policy. Firstly, it states that the following features are recognised as important natural assets of the Parish due to their landscape and/or biodiversity value, which should be conserved and enhanced where possible:
1. Woodlands (shown on Figure 32)
 2. The River Tas
 3. Ponds and ghost ponds

4. Field hedgerows
5. Drainage ditches (St Mary's Close, Alan King Playing Field, Church Road, Flordon Road)
6. Roadside Nature Reserves
7. County Wildlife sites

The policy then states that, as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should retain existing features of biodiversity value (including hedgerow and field margins, trees, veteran trees, grass verges, ancient grasslands, ponds and drainage ditches). Development proposals should identify how they will provide a minimum 10 percent net gain in biodiversity (on site in the first instance), in line with national policy, for example through:

- a. The creation of new natural habitats and improvements to, or connections between fragments of habitats identified above.
- b. The planting of additional native trees and hedgerows, for screening and landscaping purposes.
- c. Green areas between and in new developments.
- d. Soft site boundaries to new developments where adjacent to agricultural land, open spaces or settlement edge, through native hedgerows.
- e. Integrated bird boxes and bat boxes on the site.

Finally, the policy states where there is loss or damage to natural assets, as a result of development, the proposal shall provide for appropriate replacement planting or appropriate natural features on site together with a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of that planting. Where this approach is not practicable, appropriate off-site mitigation/compensation should be incorporated into the development proposal. In either case, a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of the planting should be included in the proposal.

- 4.45 As my third question (see paragraph 2.7 above), I observed that the first part of the policy includes a wide range of important natural assets which should be conserved and enhanced where possible. Whilst it is possible to identify the location of some of these assets by reference to Figures 31 and 32, and also to some of the information in the Data Profile (March 2024), some of the natural assets, such as field hedgerows and the Roadside Nature Reserves cannot be identified. I requested that the Qualifying Body provide me with a note setting out further information and details on those natural assets which are not readily identifiable within paragraphs 8.2-8.6 of the supporting text or on Figures 31 and 32. I have taken account of the Qualifying Body's response in my full assessment of this policy.
- 4.46 South Norfolk Council commented that it considers that the first part of the policy would be better placed as supporting text. I share that view as it is clear that there is no single comprehensive map, listing or supporting evidence base document of the natural assets that are categorised in the first part of the policy, to which users of the Plan could make the necessary cross-references.

- 4.47 South Norfolk Council has also commented that the policy text regarding Biodiversity Net Gain requires some amendment to ensure that it has due regard to the national policy requirements. Again, I concur with that view.
- 4.48 Accordingly, I recommend a series of amendments to this policy, which are set out in recommended modification **PM8**, to ensure that the policy provides clear and effective guidance for users of the Plan.
- 4.49 Policy NF10 (Local Green Spaces) states that the following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces for special protection (and shown on Figure 33):
1. Alan Avenue green space.
 2. Alan Avenue play area.
 3. Allotments between Blundville Manor and Alan Avenue, bordering the southern end of the playing fields.
 4. Farm track/green lane running parallel to Grove Way.
 5. Grass area at the entrance to Clabburn Close.
 6. Kings Green.
 7. Playing field at Newton Flotman Village Centre.
 8. Pond to the left of Church Farm on Greenways.
 9. Small triangle of grass with Beech tree opposite School on School Road.
 10. Small triangle of grass with noticeboard beside the school gates.
 11. Vehicle and pedestrian access to the allotments.
 12. Verges on Greenways from Newton Greenways towards Church Farm (Roadside Nature Reserve).
 13. Verges on St Mary's Close.
 14. Churchyard surrounding St Mary's Church.
 15. Pathway down to the River Tas from Joy Avenue.
 16. Pound Lane (Roadside Nature Reserve)

The policy goes on to state that the creation of new public open green space is encouraged where possible.

- 4.50 As the fourth of my preliminary questions (see paragraph 2.7 above), I raised some detailed points regarding Sites 1, 6, 10 and 11 as listed above. I take account of the Qualifying Body's response to those points, and I also take account of the supplementary information that was provided concerning Site No. 16 above.
- 4.51 I visited each of the proposed Local Green Spaces during the course of my site visit, taking into account the assessments provided in the draft Plan at pages 48-57.
- 4.52 Norfolk County Council as Highways Authority has raised objections to the proposed designation of a number of the sites on the grounds that they seek to designate highways land and could negatively impact upon the operation of the highway. The sites so concerned are Site Nos. 5, 6, 12,

13, 15 and 16. Additionally, the County Council considers that Site Nos. 9 and 10 may include highway land, and seeks confirmation from the Parish Council that the boundaries do exclude highway land. With the exception of the objection to Site No. 16 (which has been added subsequent to the Regulation 14 consultation stage), these representations were also made at the Regulation 14 consultation stage. The Consultation Statement (at page 162) records the following responses by the Qualifying Body to those objections:

*"5, 6, 12, 13, 15 are existing green spaces, not new.
9 and 10 to be left in the Plan as meet the criteria."*

- 4.53 I have given careful consideration to the County Council's objections, including the observations that were made on my site visit and the above responses to the Regulation 14 consultation. My assessment is that a number of the sites are existing highway verges or comprise land that is owned by the County Council in its capacity as Highway Authority, in some cases for historical reasons or possibly having been passed to the County Council upon the completion of nearby developments. However, within that group of sites, I am clear that the value of some sites to the community is derived not from its highway function, but as green spaces that provide wildlife habitats or areas of tranquillity for residents to enjoy. Indeed, two of the sites (Nos. 12 and 16) are designated as Roadside Nature Reserves, and their designation as Local Green Spaces is welcomed and supported by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Furthermore, Kings Green (Site No. 6), although bounded on all sides by roads is one of the main green spaces in the village and adds significantly to the character of the village. It is effectively a village green.
- 4.54 I note that NPPF Paragraph 155 b) provides for engineering operations within Green Belt, provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Given that national policy applies Green Belt protection to LGS (NPPF Paragraph 107), the designation should not inhibit the Highway Authority from reasonably undertaking any required engineering operations. In summary, my conclusion with regard to the County Council's objections is that Site Nos. 5 and 15 do not meet the criteria for their designation as Local Green Spaces. These two exceptions aside, I consider that sites Nos. 6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 16 proposed for LGS designation meet the criteria set out in paragraph 106 of the NPPF (for the specific reasons that are set out in the site assessments within the draft Plan at Pages 48-57). I also consider the sites are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period (NPPF Paragraph 105). I recommend amendments to the Plan to take account of this conclusion.
- 4.55 Some further amendments are necessary to the policy text. As noted above, the NPPF states that *"Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts"* (Paragraph 107). This is a clear and precise statement of national policy. I consider that the policy text requires amendment to have proper regard to Paragraph 107 of the NPPF

and the necessary amendments in order to satisfy the Basic Conditions are addressed by recommended modification **PM9**.

- 4.56 Policy NF11 (Important local views) states that development proposals should respect their landscape setting including any identified important local views within which they are located, or which they affect. The following five views are identified as important in the Parish (and which are shown by photographs and mapping on Figures 34 and 35):

1. From Cranes Farm looking north.
2. From track near Barley View looking towards Poringland.
3. From Ipswich Road looking south towards St. Mary's Church.
4. From Newton Flotman Village Centre site looking southwest.
5. From the Old Bridge off A140 looking along Old Street.

The policy goes on to state that development proposals within or affecting an important local view should demonstrate how they have responded positively to the view concerned and safeguarded its integrity and local importance.

- 4.57 I saw the five views listed in the policy during the course of my site visit and am satisfied that they are all important local views within the context of the village and its rural surroundings. I consider that the views are appropriately described in the draft Plan at Pages 59-61 and are shown accurately on Figure 35. I do, however, consider that the photographs at Figure 34 would benefit from being larger. I recommend a focused amendment to the policy text in order to ensure clarity for future users of the Plan, and this is addressed by recommended modification **PM10**.

- 4.58 Policy NF12 (Dark skies) states that development proposals must take account of the existing dark skies in the Parish and limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light. Street lighting will not be permitted on any new development, unless it is necessary for security or safety. Any necessary lighting must be designed to minimise the impact on dark skies by, for example, minimal light spillage, use of downlighting, movement sensitive lighting and restricting hours of lighting. Lighting likely to cause disturbance or risk to wildlife will not be supported. It goes on to state that development proposals should demonstrate compliance with best practice guidance for avoiding artificial lighting impacts on bats. Where lighting cannot be avoided altogether in proposals then it must be designed to avoid light spill onto wildlife roosts, foraging habitat, and commuting routes for bats, birds, and other species.

- 4.59 I am satisfied that the policy is suitably drafted. However, the policy refers to Figure 36, which illustrates the areas (on two maps) of light pollution and dark skies within the Parish and its surrounding areas. In the way that these two maps are presented, it would be extremely difficult for any users of the Plan to be able to interpret with any degree of accuracy the areas of light pollution and of dark skies. I therefore recommend that these two maps be replaced by equivalent maps of the Parish at a larger

scale with a much clearer definition of the various notations. This amendment is addressed by recommended modification **PM11**.

- 4.60 Policy NF13 (Localised flooding) states that development proposals within the immediate locality of the seven areas that are identified on Figure 38 as having surface water drainage issues, should take account of all relevant evidence of flooding. Development must not cause or contribute to new flooding or drainage issues and should mitigate its own flooding and drainage impacts. All new development, including minor development, is required to use an appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) which will mitigate and protect against pollution, provide drainage and wider amenity, recreational and biodiversity benefits commensurate with the size of the development (see Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes).
- 4.61 Norfolk County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)) has made a number of comments regarding this policy and its supporting text and mapping. It notes that Figure 38 only covers a part of the Plan area and recommends that it covers the entirety of the Plan area. It further notes that all external flood events in the Parish are deemed anecdotal and have not been subject to an investigation by the LLFA. However, it also advises that, according to Environment Agency datasets, there are significant areas of localised surface water flooding (ponding) and surface water flowpaths present within the Parish. I therefore recommend a series of focused amendments to the policy and its supporting text, and the addition of a new map of the whole Plan area to supplement Figure 38, in order to take account of the LLFA's comments. These amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM12**. The Qualifying Body and South Norfolk Council should also note that the photograph on Page 66 of the draft Plan obscures the final part of the policy, and this photograph should either be reduced in size or removed.
- 4.62 With recommended modifications PM8-PM12, I consider that the draft Plan's policies concerning the Natural Environment in the Plan area are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted GNLP and the adopted South Norfolk Local Plan SSAPD and DMPD documents, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Community Action Projects

- 4.63 Section 9 of the draft Plan entitled 'Community Action Projects' contains a list of 16 potential Community Action Projects concerning a variety of issues that emerged during public consultation and discussions during the preparation of the Plan. It notes that these may be funded through future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds in the Parish.
- 4.64 Subject to my comments below, these are clearly identified and separate to the land use planning policies. As such, I have not considered this section of the Plan as part of this examination: it will be for the Parish

Council in conjunction with other stakeholders to consider how such issues should be taken forward and, if appropriate, subject to further actions under other relevant legislation. However, following the Parish Council's response to my second question (see paragraph 2.7 above), two amendments are necessary to the content of Section 9 to ensure that there is no overlap with Policy NF6. These amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM13**.

- 4.65 With recommended modification PM13, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Community Action Projects is suitably drafted, and addresses matters that do not fall within the scope of this examination.

Implementation

- 4.66 Section 10 of the draft Plan is entitled 'Implementation' and addresses CIL as a mechanism to deliver local priorities, such as the projects listed in Section 9, the future monitoring of the Plan's policies and future updates to the Plan.
- 4.67 I am satisfied that this section adequately addresses (at paragraphs 10.5 and 10.6) the likelihood that the Plan will need to be formally reviewed during the Plan period up to 2038, to take account of changes to national and local planning policies.

Appendices

- 4.68 The draft Plan contains two Appendices. Appendix A is a comprehensive glossary of the terms and definitions that are used at various places in the draft Plan and its supporting documents. Appendix B is a full copy of the Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes prepared by AECOM in July 2024. For accuracy, an amendment is necessary to the title of Appendix B and this is addressed by recommended modification **PM14**.

Concluding Remarks

- 4.69 I consider that, with the recommended modifications to the Plan as summarised above and set out in full in the Appendix to this report, the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2038 meets the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood plans. Other changes (that do not affect the Basic Conditions) could be made prior to the referendum at the discretion of South Norfolk Council and the Parish Council. These could include minor non-material amendments, consequential amendments resulting from the policy modifications, typographical corrections and factual updates.¹¹

¹¹ PPG Reference ID:41-106-20190509.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2038 has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the Plan, and the supporting documents submitted with the Plan, together with the responses to my questions.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify certain policies and other matters to ensure that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2038, as modified, has no policies or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Area boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I therefore recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Area.

Overview

- 5.4 It is clear that the Newton Flotman Neighbourhood Plan is the product of much hard work undertaken since 2023 by the Parish Council, its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the many individuals and stakeholders who have contributed to the preparation and development of the Plan. In comparison to many neighbourhood plans I have examined, the relatively short timeframe for its production is particular notably and I commend all those involved in getting the Plan to this advanced stage at such pace. In my assessment, the Plan reflects the land use aspirations and objectives of the Newton Flotman community for the future planning of their Parish up to 2038. The output is a Plan which should help guide the area's development over that period, making a positive contribution to informing decision-making on planning applications by South Norfolk Council.

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Pages 26 and 28	<p><u>Policy NF2 – Housing mix (size, type and tenure)</u></p> <p>Page 26 – delete the full text of the final two bullet points on this page.</p> <p><u>Policy NF2</u></p> <p>Delete the words “(both now and in the future)” in the first paragraph of text.</p> <p>Amend the word “must” in the second paragraph of text to read “should”.</p> <p>Delete the words “should be at a minimum discount of 40 per cent” in the third paragraph of text and replace with “will be at a level of discount to be agreed with South Norfolk Council.”</p>
PM2	Page 29	<p><u>Policy NF3 – Location and scale of further housing development</u></p> <p>Amend the words “policy 6” to read “policy NF6” in the first paragraph of text.</p> <p>Delete the word “permitted” and replace with “supported” in the third paragraph of text.</p>
PM3	Page 32	<p><u>Policy NF4 – Land off Alan Avenue (NEW1), local requirements</u></p> <p>Delete the first paragraph of Policy text in full, and replace with:</p> <p>“This Policy concerns the proposed allocation of land south-west of Alan Avenue for the development of approximately 25 dwellings that is contained in the emerging South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan. This Plan will not be adopted by South Norfolk Council until 2026.</p>

		<p>The future development of this site will need to take account of the strategic policies contained in the adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan and other relevant Policies in this Plan, including Policies NF1, NF2 and NF9.</p> <p>This Policy sets out a series of local site-specific requirements that will also need to be addressed in the proposed development of the site. These requirements are as follows:"</p> <p>Delete criteria a., e., and i. from the list of requirements set out in the Policy text.</p> <p>Amend criterion b. to read as follows:</p> <p>"b) On-site Affordable Housing provision at a level of least 33% in accordance with the requirements of Policy 5 in the adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan and Policy NF2 in this Plan."</p> <p>Amend criteria b., c., d., f., g. and h to be criteria a)-f) respectively.</p> <p>Delete sub-heading Housing Mix and amend sub-heading Amenity space and Biodiversity Net Gain to read "Amenity Space."</p> <p>Amend "Sustainable Urban Drainage System" in criterion h (to be criterion e)) to read "Sustainable Drainage System".</p>
PM4	Page 34	<p><u>Policy NF5 – Business development</u></p> <p>Amend the first line of Policy text to read as follows:</p> <p>"Proposals for the development of new business premises or the extension of existing business premises, must be..."</p> <p>Amend the word "pub" in the first line of the second paragraph of Policy text to read "public house".</p>
PM5	Pages 38 and 39	<p><u>Policy NF6 – Existing and new community infrastructure</u></p>

		<p>Delete third paragraph of Policy text in full, and replace with:</p> <p>“Proposals for the change of use of existing community facilities will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) adequate other facilities exist within a reasonable distance to meet local needs at an accessible location; ii) or where it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of continued viable use through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six months of continuous marketing for the permitted and similar uses, using an appropriate agent; and • confirmation that it has been offered on a range of terms agreed to be reasonable on the advice of an independent qualified assessor; and • regard to future plans for the area including any community-led plans.” <p>Delete fourth paragraph of Policy text in full.</p> <p>Add new paragraph 6.10 to the supporting text on Page 38 to read as follows:</p> <p>“6.10 Section 9 of the Plan also sets out a range of Community Action Projects to improve community infrastructure and which will be investigated.”</p>
PM6	Pages 41 and 42	<p><u>Policy NF7 – Pedestrian and cycle connectivity</u></p> <p>Amend the title of the Policy to read “Promoting Active Travel”.</p>

PM7	Page 43	<p><u>Policy NF8 – A140 access, traffic calming and community parking</u></p> <p>Amend the first paragraph of the Policy text to read as follows:</p> <p>“Proposals for new development that will improve safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to and from the A140 road will be supported. All such proposals should be the subject of the necessary consultation with Norfolk County Council as Highways Authority.”</p>
PM8	Pages 46 and 47	<p><u>Policy NF9 – Natural assets and biodiversity</u></p> <p>Delete the first paragraph of the Policy text in full, and transfer the text (without amendment) to form an addition to paragraph 8.3 (ahead of Figures 31 and 32).</p> <p>Add new first paragraph of text, to read as follows:</p> <p>“The Plan seeks to conserve and enhance the natural assets in the Plan area that are valued by the Newton Flotman community. These assets are listed at paragraph 8.3 and are shown on Figures 31 and 32.”</p> <p>Delete the second sentence of the second part of the Policy and replace with:</p> <p>“Proposals for new development in the Plan area that are required to secure Biodiversity Net Gain, in line with national policy and the requirements set out in Policy 3 of the adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan, should seek to secure at least a 10% gain in biodiversity compared to the existing situation.”</p> <p>Add new third sentence to the second part of the Policy to read as follows:</p>

		<p>"Examples of enhancements to the biodiversity of the Plan area can include the following:</p> <p>and then list criteria a.-e. as presently drafted."</p>
PM9	Pages 47-59	<p><u>Policy NF10 – Local Green Spaces</u></p> <p>Delete existing Policy text in full and replace with:</p> <p>"The areas listed below and shown on the map at Figure 33 and on the Inset Maps at Pages 48-57 are designated as Local Green Spaces:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alan Avenue Green Space 2. Alan Avenue Play Area 3. Allotments between Blundeville Manor and Alan Avenue, bordering the southern end of the Playing Fields. 4. Farm Track/Green Lane west of Grove Way 5. Kings Green 6. Playing Field at Newton Flotman Village Centre 7. Pond to the east of Church Farm on Greenways 8. Small Green Space at School Road opposite the Primary School 9. Small Green Space at School Road adjacent to the School Gates 10. Vehicle and Pedestrian access to the Allotments from Exchange Road 11. Verges on Greenways from Newton Greenways towards Church Farm (Roadside Nature Reserve 191) 12. Verges on St. Mary's Close 13. Churchyard surrounding St. Mary's Church 14. Verges on Pound Lane (Roadside Nature Reserve 190)

		<p>Development proposals in the 14 designated Local Green Spaces listed above and defined on the accompanying maps to this Policy will be managed in accordance with national policy for Green Belts."</p> <p>Delete Sites Nos.5 and 15 from the text at Pages 50 and 56 respectively, and from Figure 33.</p> <p>Where necessary, re-number all Site Nos. at Pages 48-59, including Figure 33, to conform to the above list (Nos. 1-14).</p> <p>Amend the reference at paragraph 8.8 to Paragraph 102 of the NPPF to read "Paragraph 106".</p> <p>Amend the reference at paragraph 8.9 to Paragraph 103 of the NPPF to read "Paragraph 107".</p>
PM10	Page 62	<p><u>Policy NF11 – Important local views</u></p> <p>Delete the first sentence of Policy text and replace with:</p> <p>"All proposals for new development in the Plan area should take into account the landscape setting of the development site and any identified important local views within the area of the site, which might be affected by the development."</p>
PM11	Pages 62 and 63	<p><u>Policy NF12 – Dark skies</u></p> <p>Delete Figure 36 in its current form, and replace with two new maps of the Parish at a larger scale showing the areas of light pollution and dark skies with much clearer definition.</p>
PM12	Pages 65 and 66	<p><u>Policy NF13 – Localised flooding</u></p> <p>Paragraph 8.23 and 15th line of Policy text – delete the word "urban" from the term "Sustainable urban Drainage Systems", as</p>

		<p>Sustainable Drainage Systems are applicable in both urban and rural settings. (Note that the entry on Page 77 is correct).</p> <p>Retain Figure 38 in its current form but add a new map of the entire Plan area at a suitable legible scale (to precede Figure 38 and be numbered accordingly) showing Surface Water Flooding using information from the Environment Agency's latest datasets and taking account of the LLFA's comments at paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11 of their representations (Ref. NFNP26).</p>
PM13	Page 67	<p><u>Section 9 – Community Action Projects</u></p> <p>Paragraph 9.2 – add additional project, as follows:</p> <p>"17. Recreation/Sports areas e.g. outside gym and tennis court."</p> <p>Delete the words "<i>Note: there is some overlay with Policy NF6.</i>" at the foot of this paragraph.</p>
PM14	Page 77	<p><u>Appendix B</u></p> <p>Amend title to read "Newton Flotman Design Guidance and Codes".</p>